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Graduation open house held for teens in foster care

17 high school seniors attended partnership event with the Indianapolis Colts

INDIANAPOLIS (June 19, 2019) – Seventeen high school seniors in foster care celebrated their high school graduation with a special open house event at the Indianapolis Colts Pavilion. Project Open House is a party to honor several teens aging out of the local foster care system as they accomplish this life milestone despite challenges placed in front of them.

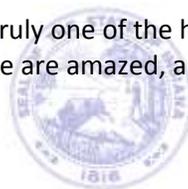
“This event means a lot to me,” said graduating senior Janiah Rendell. “When kids are put into the foster care system they think ‘no one cares about me,’ but when someone puts together an event like this, you see that people really do support you and people care about you.”

The attendees, who are all from central Indiana, applied to participate in this joint program hosted by the Department of Child Services, the Indianapolis Colts and Cargo Services Inc.

“These kids are an absolute inspiration considering what they’ve had to overcome in their short lives,” Colts GM Chris Ballard and his wife Kristin said. “Facing adversity, they’ve produced the hard work and commitment needed to earn their diplomas which is a significant accomplishment. They are going to move forward and achieve extraordinary things in life and they have all the support. We are very proud of them.”

Each of the 17 attendees personalized their own graduation experience by inviting up to 25 guests including family, friends, neighbors, teachers and coaches. They also planned their own menu and received graduation cakes, cards and gifts. In the fall, most of the graduates plan to attend college to continue their education.

“Being a part of such a wonderful event, is truly one of the highlights of our year,” said Cargo Services Inc. Chief Financial Officer Steve Fugate. “We are amazed, and inspired so much, by the character, and



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resolve that these young men and women have shown, as they achieve this significant landmark in their lives. We are proud of who each and every one of them are becoming, and are grateful that we can come alongside them.”

DCS offices across the state are also throwing graduation parties for older foster youth. At least ten different celebrations will take place by the end of the summer.

“Graduating high school is an important milestone in life. This accomplishment is even greater for many of our graduates who have overcome difficult life challenges,” DCS Director Terry Stigdon said. “I was honored to be at their graduation party celebrating their momentous success, and I can’t wait to see what they do in their futures”.

Teens who receive older youth services through DCS are eligible for financial assistance, resources and mentorship.

*Pictures from event are attached to this email.

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About Indiana DCS: *The Indiana Department of Child Services engages with families and collaborates with state, local and community partners to protect children from abuse and neglect and to provide child support services. Indiana Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline: 800.800.5556. Child Support Customer Service Kidsline: 800.840.8757 or 317.233.5437. www.in.gov/dcs*



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